887 nobility they have moved as high in position as their inherited potential allows.

886 In appearance he usually grows a chin beard, which comes late, usually not before the age of thirty, and is greying when a man becomes a "shemagalyē" at about 40. At that time he is usually a grandfather.

As ruler at the apex of his own social pyramid, he is limited only by direct physical strength, in which no one expects him to excel. But if a former warrior, he may be vain and not admit his fading physical strength, and try to show that he can still hold up against young men in warlike games. This is the only time when an elder is occasionally mocked, as "wäbärra" (lit. he struts).

888 Dependency in old age is no problem among rural kin groups living on settled land, whether their own or rented. Even in senility, the elder is respected and cared for; even when, as he himself admits, he is "good only for guarding chickens" (tertes alä" - became senile).

888 792 However, dependency of an old woman is a more difficult problem, though she, too, is generally cared for. But since she has no functions of leadership, her status lacks the positive, if she becomes a widow, and is too weak to perform the household labors [[145]] of women. Also, woman fade physically more rapidly than men. As a result, the "mäbälat" or "baltet", a greying woman past menopause, or widow of serious mind and spirit, often takes vows as a nun, wears the "qob" of a nun though continuing in her old residence, and spends much time in the churchyard, working in the "betelehem" hut where beer and bread for church use are prepared. Nuns are always old women, partly because it is not considered proper for a

2: Allen G-5 (1941) 1943 MP5 Amhara MP5

of Semitic blood. There is rather more of the Semite in the Tigraian and the Amhara than in the Shoan and the Gojjami. The Tigraian language has come much under Semitic influences, and there are many common elements in Amharic and Arabic: not only in vocabulary but also in syntax. The Amharic alphabet, with over two hundred and fifty odd letters, is a very exact instrument for rendering the language. It is derived from one of the old Semitic alphabets of the Middle East. Amharic has many explosive sounds which often give the impression that the speaker is excited and indignant when he is not, and with the impatient foreigner this can sometimes lead to misunderstandings.

Physically the Amhara is slight and light-boned with regular rather delicate features. He has quick almost bird-like movements and his manner gives the impression which I cannot describe better than by the word fluttering. The hair and beard has the characteristic Hamitic corrugation. Men often go iron grey in middle life, but seldom white. The hair of the women is artificially frizzed and dressed with butter-grease to fix it. This gives them a gollywog appearance.

The Amhara have the most charming manners and they like to stand on ceremony. They have a complicated social hierarchy and always dismount as a salutation to superior persons. They will also touch with their lips the hands or knees of superiors. At the same time they have the naturally easy and democratic outlook of the East; and the poorest man will expect attention and the right of access to a Ras, or even to the Emperor. The approaches to the palace at Addis Ababa were lined with sometimes quite humble people, farmers and soldiers, waiting an opportunity to secure the Emperor's decision on some matter.

To respond to his ceremonial manners is an easy way to the heart of the Ethiopian. At the same time they are quick to take offence and their shrill voices are soon raised in anger.

The frail physique and mercurial temperament of the Amhara is doubtless the result of the rarefied alpine atmosphere and of a diet predominantly of grain paste seasoned with strong condiments—which they vary from time to time with orgies on practically raw meat. But fragile as they look, the Amhara are, nevertheless, extremely hardy. They will sleep out in all weathers with nothing to cover them but their thin cotton robes; they are remarkable runners and can maintain a jog trot all day; they are like goats on the hillside.

I believe the Amhara to be naturally intelligent with a brain which only awaits proper training and development. During the five years of the Italian occupation, no small proportion of the population of Addis Ababa acquired a fair knowledge of Italian. I knew a boy of twenty who, in addition to excellent English, was proficient in Arabic, Somali, Galla, and Swahili. He came, of course, from Harar, which is a great metropolis for peoples from all round the Red Sea. Abyssinian recruits acquired a knowledge of Morse with remarkable facility.

When it is possible to overcome the linguistic difficulty and get on friendly terms with Ethiopians, they prove delightful companions, naturally kind, generous and friendly, with a charming sense of humour and often a nice